

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9817

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO ALL NATO CAPITALS 4934

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLOSACLANT

USCINCEUR

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 USNATO 0488

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, NATO, OR, XF, XG, XI

SUBJ: NATO STUDY ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF REOPENING THE SUEZ CANAL

REF: USNATO 325

1. AT THE JANUARY 28 POLADS MEETING ON THE SUEZ CANAL, PACE OF REOPENING IMPLICATIONS STUDY PICKED UP A BIT.

2. COMMITTEE WELCOMED TWO CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED IN ADVANCE:

A) A BELGIAN PAPER, INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF WHICH IS SET FORTH BELOW, AND

B) A BRIEF ADDITIONAL U.S. CONTRIBUTION WHICH HAD BEEN DISTRIBUTED BY WASHINGTON ON NATO-WIDE (SEE DIA WASHDC SECRET

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222208Z OR AS(75)10).

3. CANADIAN REP (FOWELL) SAID OTTAWA IS PREPARING A GENERAL PAPER WHICH WILL COVER:

- A) STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS,
- B) REPERCUSSIONS ON CANADA,
- C) EFFECTS ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE KEEPING, AND
- D) OTHER ASPECTS.

4. ITALIAN REP (RERRETTI) MADE ORAL CONTRIBUTION ADDRESSED TO PREVIOUS UK PAPER. IN SUM ITALIANS FEEL:

- A) DRY CARGO TRAFFIC WILL REACH PRE-1967 LEVELS WITHIN SEVEN MONTHS OF REOPENING;
- B) UK CONTRIBUTION GENERALLY UNDERESTIMATES COMMERCIAL IMPACT OF CANAL REOPENING AND THE PERCENTAGE OF WORLD SHIPPING WHICH WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SUEZ ROUTE;
- C) U.S. INTERPRETATION OF EFFECTS OF REOPENING ON BALANCE OF NAVAL POWER IN INDIAN OCEAN IS MORE PERSUASIVE THAN THAT OF UK;
- D) STUDY SHOULD GIVE APPROPRIATE ATTENTION TO NEW SOVIET AIRCRAFT CARRIER KIEV WHICH THEY PREDICT WILL HAVE STOL CAPABILITY AND WILL BE CAPABLE OF TRANSITING THE CANAL.

5. TURKISH REP (ERALP) MADE USEFUL INTERVENTION POINTING OUT CONSISTENCIES AND INCONSISTENCIES IN VARIOUS MATERIALS ALREADY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE.

6. FRENCH REP (BEAUCHATAUD) MADE INITIAL FRENCH ORAL-CONTRIBUTION WHICH CONCENTRATED ON FOLLOWING POINTS: FRANCE BELIEVES:

- A) WHILE OIL TRAFFIC WILL BE LIMITED, DRY CARGO TRAFFIC WILL DEVELOP NOTICEABLY;
- B) SOVIETS WILL USE CANAL TO SHIP GOODS TO EASTERN USSR, THUS EASING STRAIN ON TRANS-SIBERIAN SYSTEM WHICH IS ALREADY OVERLOADED;
- C) NET IMPACT OF CANAL REOPENING ON INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL POWER BALANCE WILL BE DISTINCT ADVANTAGE TO THE SOVIETS; AND

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D) SOVIET POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN BORDER COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY EAST AFRICA, WILL NOTICEABLY INCREASE.

7. IMS REP (CAPT. WAITE-UKNA):

- A) PROMISED IMS CONTRIBUTION IN NEAR FUTURE;
- B) CONFIRMED SOVIET CARRIER KIEV WILL BE CAPABLE OF PASSING THROUGH CANAL, BUT SAID THAT WHILE KIEV WILL BE STOL/VSTOL CAPABLE, THERE IS NO CONFIRMATION THAT SOVIETS INTEND TO USE IT IN STOL ROLE;
- C) POINTED TO HAZARDS IN USING SHIP DAYS OR EVEN TOTAL SOVIET SHIP COUNT IN INDIAN OCEAN AREA TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS WITHOUT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT TWO OPERATIONS THAT CAUSED

SURGE IN SOVIET PRESENCE BUT NOT IN THEIR MILITARY
CAPABILITY: I.E. CLEARING THE HARBOR AT DACCA AND CLEARING
THE SOUTHERN END OF THE SUEZ; AND
D) EMPHASIZED THE POINTS IN UK CONTRIBUTION THAT QUESTIONS
OF CANAL TOLLS AND COMMERCIAL INSURANCE RATES WILL AFFECT
FUTURE CANAL USE.

8. CONCERNING PROCEDURES, A NUMBER OF POLADS EXPRESSED THE
OPINION THAT THE COMMITTEE NOW HAS SUFFICIENT MATERIAL TO MOVE
INTO DRAFTING PHASE. CHAIRMAN SAID IS AND IMS ARE COORDINATING
ON A FIRST DRAFT WHICH SHOULD BE AVAILABLE SOON. U.S. REP
(LEDOGAR) POINTED OUT THAT A NUMBER OF ALLIES, PARTICULARLY

THOSE WHICH BORDER ON THE MEDITERRANEAN, HAVE NOT MADE FORMAL
CONTRIBUTIONS, AND THE VALUE OF THIS CONSULTATION WOULD BE
GREATLY ENHANCED BY WIDEST POSSIBLE ALLIED PARTICIPATION.

9. COMMENT: MISSION IS ENCOURAGED THAT DIFFERENCES AMONG ALLIES
OVER FORMAT AND SCOPE OF STUDY SEEM TO BE RECEDING AS THESE PREFER-
ENCES ARE PREEMPTED BY THE CONTENT OF THE VARIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS.
THUS, THE DUAL U.S. OBJECTIVES IN THIS STUDY (BROAD PARTICIPATION
IN A MEANINGFUL CONSULTATION AND A WORTHWHILE FINAL PRODUCT) MAY
NOT BE AS MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE AS WE HAD FEARED. END COMMENT.

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10. BEGIN BELGIAN TEXT:

INFLUENCE OF THE REOPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL

A. INFLUENCE ON MERCHANT SHIPPING

(1) A DECLARATION BY THE SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITY ANTICIPATES, IN PRINCIPLE, THE REOPENING IN 1975 OF THIS WATERWAY TO SHIPS DRAWING 38 FOOT MAXIMUM (11M58), THAT IS TO 1967 STANDARDS. WE SHALL ALSO ASSUME THAT THE TOLL RATES WILL BE SUCH AS NOT TO DISUADE SHIPPING FROM USING THE CANAL IN FAVOR OF LONGER BUT LESS COSTLY ITINERARIES.

(2) AS FOR TANKER TRAFFIC, IT CAN BE ESTIMATED THAT THE CANAL, THROUGH WHICH 154 MILLION TONS PASSED IN TRANSIT IN 1966, SHOULD LOGICALLY ABSORB 200 MILLION TONS IN 1976. THIS AMOUNTS TO SAYING
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THAT, FOR AN AVERAGE LOAD OF 35,000 TO 40,000 TONS, THE NUMBER OF TANKERS USING THE RED SEA AND THE CANAL DAILY WILL APPROXIMATE 14 TO 15 IN EACH DIRECTION (THE 38 FT. DRAFT LIMIT IS EQUIVALENT TO LESS THAN 50,000 DWT).

THIS TRAFFIC WILL BE A COMPLEMENT OF THAT ON THE CAPE ROUTE, GIVEN THE FORESEEABLE INCREASE IN PRODUCTION (ONE BILLION TONS INSTEAD OF 800 MILLION) BUT THE NUMBER OF SHIPS TAKING THE SOUTHERN REOUTE WILL DECREASE, TRAFFIC BEING HANDLED BY MORE UNITS OF LARGER TONNAGE.

(3) TRANSPORT OF SOLID MERCHANDISE BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA WOULD RAPIDLY RECOVER ALL ITS IMPORTANCE BY THIS ROUTE, FOR BULK AS WELL AS FOR GENERAL CARGO. DEVELOPMENT OF CONTAINER CARRIER LINES IS TO BE EXPECTED. AN ESTIMATE OF TEN SHIPS DAILY IN EACH DIRECTION, ADDED TO THE TANKERS, APPEARS TO BE REALISTIC.

B. INFLUENCE ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF FORCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE STRATEGIC MOBILITY OF SOVIET NAVAL FORCES WILL GAIN CONSIDERABLY FROM THE REOPENING OF THE CANAL. FOR EXAMPLE, THE DISTRNCE FROM SEVASTOPOL TO ADEN VIA THE CAPE IS 11,200 NAUTICAL MILES; VIA SUEZ IT IS CUT DOWN TO 2,500 NAUTICAL MILES ONLY. THE DISTANCE FROM MURMANSK TO ADEN VIA THE CAPE IS 12,000 NAUTICAL MILPES AND 6,200 VIA SUEZ. REINFORCEMENTS IN ADEN CAN BE ESTIMATED AT 3 CRUISERS, ONE OF WHICH A CLGM, 6 DDGS, 3 DDS AND AT LEAST 12 DES OR PCES.

THE DIESEL SUBMARINES (SS) WILL PROBABLY TAKE THIS ITINERARY BUT DOUBTLESS IT IS VERY PROBABLE THAT, FOR EVIDENT REASONS OF DISCRETION, THE SSNS AND SSGNS WILL CONTINUE TO USE THE CAPE ROUTE.

IN PRINCIPLE, THE SUEZ CANAL HAS THE STATUS OF AN INTERNATIONAL SEAWAY, WHERE NAVIGATION IS ENTIRELY FREE, EVEN TO BELLIGERANTS, UNDER RESERVE OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEFENSE OF EGYPT

(1888 CONSTANTINOPLE CONVENTION). IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THIS STATUS MAY BE REVISED ON THE OCCASION OF THE REOPENING, BUT IT CAN BE EXPECTED THAT THE USSR WILL SUPPORT ACTIVELY THE PRINCIPLE OF FREE PASSAGE FOR WARSHIPS.

IN FACT, IT IS NOTED THAT THE USSR IS BEING VERY DISCREET ABOUT THE PROPOSAL TO NEUTRALIZE THE INDIAN OCEAN, A PEACE ZONE RESERVED
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FOR RIPARIAN COUNTRIES, SUPPORTED BY INDIA. IT IS WITHOUT DOUBT THAT THE POSSIBLE NEUTRALIZATION OF THE SUEZ CANAL, WHICH WOULD PROHIBIT PASSAGE OF ANY NON-EGYPTION WARSHIP, WOULD CAUSE A SERIOUS PREJUDICE TO THE MOBILITY OF SOVIET NAVAL FORCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

C. INFLUENCE ON THE THREAT
THE REOPENING OF THE CANAL TO TRAFFIC WILL NOT CHANGE THE NATURE OF THE VARIOUS TYPES OF THREATS MENTIONED ABOVE.

FURTHERMORE, IT CAN BE CONSIDERED THAT THE BAB-EL-MANDEB STRAITS WOULD BE AN IDEAL PASSAGE POINT TO MINE, AS WELL AS THE OPENING TO THE PERSIAN GULF.

CONCLUSION
MERCHANT SHIPPING IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND SOUTHERN ATLANTIC, IN A PERIOD OF CRISIS, COULD BE SUBJECTED TO A CERTAIN THREAT FROM ENEMY NAVIES--THE SHIPS MOST EXPOSED BEING THE LARGE TANKERS AND SHIPS CARRYING PRECIOUS ORES.

THIS THREAT COULD PRESENT SEVERAL STAGES, RANGING FROM SIMPLE HARASSMENT TO THE ATTACK ON MERCHANT SHIPS.

MEANS OF PARRYING EXIST, BUT THERE IMPLEMENTATION WOULD BE DIFFICULT, IF NOT HAZARDOUS, SINCE THE PLACE AND TIME OF THE EVENT ARE DETERMINED BY THE OPPONENT.

HOWEVER, IT MAY BE THOUGHT THAT, IN CASE OF A SERIOUS CRISIS, ATTACK ON LINES OF MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS IN THESE ZONES, ALTHOUGH PART OF THE MISSIONS OF THE WARSAW PACT'S NAVAL FORCES, WOULD NOT BE ONE OF THEIR PRIORITY TASKS.
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